

## ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

BIRDS OF THE SOUTHWEST PACIFIC. A FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF THE AREA BETWEEN SAMOA, NEW CALEDONIA, AND MICRONESIA. By Ernst Mayr. Macmillan Co., N.Y., 1945: 5 × 7½ in., xix + 316 pp., 3 col. pls., 16 figs., 1 map. \$3.75.

The war has greatly broadened the horizons of American bird students. Most of us now have relatives or friends living in the south Pacific on islands of whose very existence we were hardly aware a few months ago. As a result, there has been a tremendous increase of interest in the fauna of these islands, and museums have had many requests for information. In response to this demand, Ernst Mayr, the leading authority on the birds of the southwest Pacific, has prepared this excellent field guide. He describes the 388 species and lists the 415 additional subspecies of birds that are known to occur on the following groups of islands: Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, New Caledonia, Loyalty, New Hebrides, Banks, Santa Cruz, Solomon, Marshall, Caroline, Mariannas, and Palau. It should be emphasized that, although the book will be useful to visitors to almost any part of the southwest Pacific, it does not attempt to treat the avifaunas of the Philippines, New Guinea, or even the Bismarcks.

The author has solved very cleverly the difficult problems presented by the necessity of describing the varied bird faunas of a dozen archipelagos. The wide-ranging sea birds and shore birds are covered in the first two chapters. Then a chapter is devoted to a very good family-by-family description of the land and fresh-water birds of the whole area. The rest of the book treats consecutively the land and fresh-water birds of seven geographical subdivisions. The avifaunas of many islands are separately listed in the most condensed form possible by using only the serial numbers of the species (as given in the preceding account). In this ingenious fashion all the known resident birds of Guadalcanal, for example, are listed in five lines. For most of the archipelagos the author gives a brief history of the ornithological exploration and references to pertinent scientific papers.

The three color plates by Jaques depict 37 species, including at least one representative of each of the more characteristic bird families of the region. In addition, Alexander Seidel has contributed very good black and white drawings of 23 other species. The original paintings were excellent, but they have not been particularly well reproduced, and the printing of the explanatory legends many pages away from the plates will interfere with their convenient use.

Fortunately the author calls attention to the great need for information on the habitats and ecological relations of these birds. An outline in the introductory section and additional indications all through the text will show any interested amateur how to make important contributions to scientific knowledge.

This volume will be invaluable to any naturalist stationed in the southwest Pacific and will provide a tremendous stimulus to ornithological research in the area for many years to come.—J. Van Tyne.

WOODCOCK. By John Alden Knight. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1944: 5½ × 8½ in., x + 161 + ii pp., 6 col. pls., 17 photographs. \$4.00.

This is the first strictly popular book dealing solely with the American Woodcock. However, ornithologists will readily question whether it is, as the publishers claim, the first "full and up-to-date account" of the species. The book is written specifically for sportsmen. Four of the eleven chapters deal with hunting methods and equipment, dogs, guns, and suitable cover for good shooting. The other chapters, except two which are anecdotal in character, give a popularized résumé of recent findings on the habits, life cycle, migration, and ecological relationships of the species. The chapter on "Fight for Survival" is a laudably clear-minded appraisal of the Woodcock's precarious status as a game bird.